



Michigan Trout Unlimited

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May 9, 2011

Michigan House of Representatives
Natural Resources, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Committee

Re: HB4554, Comments in opposition

Conservation, protection and restoration of coldwater fisheries and the environs that support them is the foundation of the Trout Unlimited mission. Coldwater fisheries like trout, salmon and steelhead only thrive in high-quality healthy habitats. Trout Unlimited was started here in Michigan 52 years ago, by people concerned about improving our rivers' abilities to support wild trout. We've worked tirelessly for decades since then to improve our rivers, most of which had been grossly damaged by the logging era. We now have world-class fisheries that help provide both a high-quality of life for our citizens, but also is a major driver of our tourism economy.

Our organization recently became aware of HB4554 and has significant concerns with it. The primary objection is to the removal of these old saw logs from inland streams. These giant old logs have now been in streams for over 100 years. The very makeup of our streams is now based on the logs' presence. Where these have settled out and come to rest, they now hold the stream together, determine its shape, and provide critical cover for fish. Removing them from most of our streams would be akin to removing structural support I-beams from a skyscraper. The result will be instability, erosion, new sedimentation, and a loss of productivity in those fisheries. We have worked for 50 years now, among numerous things, to fix erosion in our streams and the delivery of sediment that result from it. We've spent hundreds of millions of dollars in private and public funds, and countless volunteer hours to make our streams as healthy as possible. This would swiftly reverse those diligent works, and jeopardize fisheries annually valued in the billions of dollars.

Removal of old abandoned logs from our streams will create significant damage to inland streams. The money it will take to fix the damage caused will far exceed the economic benefit from any logs that can be salvaged from our inland streams (and greatly exceeds the proposed bond level of \$20,000 in the bill draft). It would routinely cost in excess of \$20,000 to fix the site of one key log removed from a stream bank. Also, the cost of less productive fisheries cannot be absorbed right now given the economic condition of our state; our citizens are depending on them to attract tourism. Saw log extraction might be done in a more reasonable manner in lakes and Great Lakes, but cannot similarly be done in streams. This aspect of the bill is heavily objected to. We recommend HB4554 be amended to exclude the removal of saw logs from inland streams.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We will be glad to discuss this matter in depth if desired.

Sincerely,

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To conserve, protect and restore coldwater fisheries and their watersheds